

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Request for Proposals

Rhode Island Tourism and Business Attraction Branding Campaign

ISSUE DATE: July 7, 2015

BIDS DUE: July 31, 2015

Overview

Rhode Island is now engaged in a major effort to reimagine and rebrand itself for the purpose of projecting a more favorable image to the world. Under the leadership of a jobs-focused Governor and General Assembly, Rhode Island has dedicated substantial political and financial resources to bring together its people around a new vision for the state – one that brands Rhode Island as the best place in the Northeast to live, grow a business, and visit as a tourist or business traveler.

To that end, the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, the state's chief economic development agency, is requesting proposals from firms and groups of firms for compelling outreach, design, branding, marketing, and advertising campaigns that rebrand our state and promote it effectively and memorably as a place to visit, live, work, or start a business.

We are seeking responses that offer a fresh look at the state and flexible solutions in areas that include, but are not limited to: public outreach, design, strategy, brand development, public relations, advertising, and market research.

The selected bidder(s) shall:

- Engage stakeholders throughout our state to harness the many different Rhode Island experiences;
- Leverage this engagement to drive public buy-in and generate regional and national attention;
- Develop an authentic, captivating brand that advances civic engagement, tourism, and business attraction;
- Engage public and private partners to deploy this brand;
- Provide public relations, marketing, and advertising services to promote Rhode Island as a place to live, work, visit, or start a business.

Rhode Island has committed approximately \$5 million over the next year to rebrand itself and promote that new brand. Our chief focus is tourism promotion, though civic engagement and business attraction are crucial and, ideally, complementary to it. The \$5 million sum includes researching and building a new brand, planning how that brand will be rolled out, and deploying that brand through ad buys, social media plays, grants to local tourism regions, public events that raise Rhode Island's profile, and other means. We look forward to responses that lay out how this sum should be spent optimally.

Background

As the state's lead economic development organization, the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation is committed to working with public, private and non-profit partners to create the conditions for businesses to thrive and improve quality of life for our citizens. www.commerceri.com.

Objective

Engage a firm or group of firms to promote a coordinated, statewide brand that increases awareness of Rhode Island and its attractiveness as a place to visit, work, live, or grow a business.

Respondents have multiple options to respond:

- As an individual agency with competencies in all areas that meet the requirements of the RFP;
- As an individual agency for a portion of the RFP that you have an expertise in and experience collaborating with other firms;
- As a team that combines multiple agencies/groups that have expertise in individual disciplines that meet the criteria of one or more areas.

Requirements

Please provide the following information:

1. An overview of your firm(s) including name and parent company (if applicable), years in operation, office locations (including headquarters), primary point of contact, and bios of team members that would be engaged in this project.
2. A list of the tourism and business attraction specific experience you have with outreach, design, branding, marketing, and/or advertising plan development, as well as whether there is a specific industry or type of work your firm specializes in.
3. Three case studies of your work that resulted in a successfully developed and implemented outreach, design, branding, marketing, and/or advertising plan, including the business results achieved. Tourism and business attraction examples are especially welcome.
4. Three references for your outreach, design, branding, marketing, and/or advertising plan development work including company name, primary client name, contact details, and brief explanations of services provided.
5. Any potential conflicts with your existing vendor client base and this RFP.

Scope of Work

Please provide a detailed description of your expertise and your proposal to bring that expertise to Rhode Island in accordance with the following:

A. Branding, Public Outreach and Creative Development

- A. Please highlight your design and branding experience, including especially tourism and business attraction-specific examples, as well as the creative ways you have previously and now plan to engage the public, conduct research, and execute brand development.
- B. Responses should demonstrate your ability and plans to engage and manage a diverse range of stakeholders.

B. Market Research and Measurement

- A. Please outline your market research process and explain how and with what metrics you have assessed and will assess success in Rhode Island. Responses should include pre-and-post benchmarking as well as analysis of other states' successful campaigns.
- B. Please provide specific examples of successful market research and measurement you have employed and plan to employ here.

C. Media Services

- A. Digital and social media. Responses should describe how you have executed and will execute an overarching brand in the digital and social media spaces. How will you measure results?
- B. Public relations. Responses should describe your experience with brand management and strategy, event planning and convention attendance, and tourist and business attraction and how you will bring that success here.
- C. Advertising. Responses should describe how you have achieved successful placement and generated a strong return on investment through traditional and digital/social media and how you will achieve that in Rhode Island.

Development Process and Budget

- A. Explain the overall process you would use to develop the plan:
 - a. Detail project management at your firm(s);
 - b. Provide a description of your strategy and planning process;
 - c. Provide an overview of your implementation process;
 - d. Detail the technical needs and systematic implementation that would be needed;
 - e. Outline analytical metrics that will be integrated into measuring the success of the plan.
- B. Provide a comprehensive budget for all potential services you might provide under this RFP, including researching and building a new brand, planning how that brand will be deployed, and deploying that brand through ad buys, social media plays, grants to local tourism regions to promote the state brand, and local attractions. The total potential budget is \$5 million. You may budget for all or a portion thereof. We look forward to responses that lay out how this sum should be spent optimally, as well as explain how respondents will look for ways to save money and ensure the highest return on investment.

Evaluation Process

Respondents will submit their proposals within the timeframe indicated. Our evaluation will be geared to identify those proposals that offer the best combination of expertise and value. The Commerce Corporation will not, however, base its evaluation solely on price and reserves the right to make an award to respondents who may not necessarily be the lowest bidder.

No extension in the submission date will be granted on an individual basis. If the Commerce Corporation determines that the timeframe it has established for this RFP is inadequate, it may, at its option, extend the submission deadline for all respondents.

Respondents agree that their proposals are a firm agreement to provide services at a stipulated rate to the Commerce Corporation. Those rates will be reflected in the statement of work engagement letter. All pricing schedules quoted in response to this RFP, however, must remain in effect for the duration of the contract if awarded.

Respondents may withdraw their proposals at any time by notifying the Commerce Corporation Communications Department in writing of their intention to do so.

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation will be taking an accelerated search process that includes:

- A. A question and answer period done via conference call on July 14, 2015, from 1:00-2:00 p.m. EST. Questions must be submitted 24 hours in advance and requests for the call-in information made to commteam@commercerci.com.
- B. Physical and electronic proposals (PDF format) must be received by the commerce corporation prior to 4:00 p.m. EST on July 31, 2015.
- C. Review/evaluation phase:
 - a. Evaluation: The state will review proposals received prior to the deadline and identify three to five with the highest scores.
 - b. Oral presentation: The Corporation will interview the three to five highest scoring respondents at the Commerce Corporation office (315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, RI 02908) during the weeks of August 10 and August 17. **Finalists may be asked to present draft concepts for the Rhode Island campaign, and to provide additional information as requested.**
 - c. The Corporation will identify the respondent with the highest score to pursue contract negotiations.
 - d. References, which are required and may be checked by the Corporation.
 - e. Contract award, which is anticipated by August 31, 2015.

Proposal Format

Twenty five (25) physical copies of each response to this RFP must be mailed or hand-delivered in a sealed envelope marked:

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
ATTN: RI Tourism and Business Attraction Branding RFP
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, RI 02908

Responses must be delivered no later than 4:00 p.m. EST on Friday, July 31, 2015. Any responses received after this time will not be considered. The physical copy will be considered the submission. In addition, an electronic version should be submitted to commteam@commerceri.com (but will not be considered without meeting the physical delivery timeframe).

No phone calls will be accepted.

The Corporation reserves the right to terminate the project prior to entering into any negotiated contract with any qualified firm or firms pursuant to this request for proposals, and by responding hereto, no firm or firms are vested with any rights in any way whatsoever.

Questions, interpretations or clarifications concerning this RFP should be directed by e-mail to commteam@commerceri.com no later than 4:30 p.m. EST on July 14, 2015. Responses to questions, interpretations or clarifications concerning this RFP will be posted online via addendum at www.commerceri.com and www.purchasing.ri.gov by Friday, July 17, 2015 to ensure equal awareness of important facts and details.

1. The Commerce Corporation will not provide any reimbursement for any cost associated with the development or presentation of a proposal.
2. Failure to include any of the required information may have an adverse impact on the evaluation of a proposal.
3. Inclusion of client information or references that reflect upon respondents' consulting expertise or experience is desirable.
4. Proposal should be prepared in a standard 8 ½ x 11 format and adequately bound.
5. A table of contents and an executive summary of the proposal should be included.
6. A fee schedule for work proposed under the RFP should be included.

Subsequent Contract Terms and Conditions

1. The Commerce Corporation reserves the right to award all, part or none of this solicitation. Awards may be granted to a single applicant, a combination of applicants, or no applicants.
2. Awarding of a contract under this RFP does not create an employment relationship. Individuals performing services required by the contract are not employees of the state nor of the Commerce Corporation.
3. Only limited, pre-approved travel will be reimbursed.
4. Contracts awarded under this RFP are not subject to any sales tax or federal excise tax. An exemption certificate will be furnished upon request.
5. Respondents will be paid upon submission of proper invoices to the Commerce Corporation at the prices stipulated in the contract. Failure to follow instructions may result in a delay of processing invoices for payment.
6. All billing and subsequent payments must be in arrears.
7. No oral statement, email, mail or other communication issued by respondents shall modify or otherwise affect the terms, conditions, or specifications stated in this RFP or its subsequent contract unless accepted in writing by the Commerce Corporation.
8. Respondents shall have the capability, experience and expertise to provide the Commerce Corporation with services in accordance with the requirements set forth in this RFP and consistent with the representations made in the submission under this RFP.